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ABSTRACT

This study investigated conditions of teaching influencing professional moral development, how teachers' activities lead to moral understanding, how teachers develop professional morality, and whether some of that process can begin during preservice education. The case study involved observations of and interviews with Julie, a preservice kindergarten teacher during her first 8 weeks of student teaching in a diverse, rural school. Julie provided a reflective journal, and her university supervisor provided copies of documents she generated in the supervision process. From the very beginning, Julie believed her professional moral responsibility was to put the children first. She emphasized the integrity of the individual child and the importance of respecting each child's autonomy. By the end of the 8 weeks, her understanding of what putting the child first meant differed significantly. Complications that modified her understanding of her moral imperative included sharing responsibility with others, even if she did not always agree; handling students' indeterminate needs; and accepting the necessity of curricular standards. Julie's case sharply contrasted with that of another student teacher who articulated a socially sensitive model of her professional moral responsibilities and spent considerable time and effort trying to understand others' viewpoints, but was less democratic in her actual operations. (Contains 22 references.) (SM)

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Putting the Child First:

How One Student Teacher Negotiated the Moral Landscape of Teaching

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Putting the Child First: How One Student Teacher Negotiated the Moral Landscape of Teaching

Recent scholarship has substantiated that teaching is fundamentally a moral endeavor (Chang, 1994; Oser, 1994; Tom, 1984). Teachers are regularly required to make decisions that have predictable long-term consequences for the people to whom they are professionally responsible. Yet, there has been little empirical research on the moral activity of teachers in their everyday professional lives (Fenstermacher, 1986). A small number of studies have established links between justice reasoning and attitudes about student discipline (cf. Johnston & Lubomodrov, 1987), but MacCallum (1993) found that contextual factors were instrumental in the decisions that teachers actually made in discipline situations. The moral operations of teachers in real-life professional settings appear to be quite complex.

There is also some evidence that teachers are ill prepared for the complexity of their moral responsibilities. Exiting seniors in teacher education programs appear to have almost no recognition of the moral implications of teaching decisions (Sirotnik, 1990), but experienced teachers recognize moral dilemmas and may have a characteristic way of operating to resolve them. Unfortunately, for some experienced teachers, the usual method of operation is to avoid or delegate most professional decisions (Oser, 1994). Clearly, teaching experience may be the most formative element in a teacher's professional moral development, as Oser (1994) suggests: "Professional morality has to be built up by the professionals themselves and has to manifest itself under the concrete conditions of a setting, in each classroom and each school" (p. 116). However, teaching

experience alone does not ensure that teachers will accept full responsibility for their professional decisions.

What are the conditions of teaching that influence professional moral development? How does the teacher's activity in the setting lead to moral understanding? How do teachers go about "building up" a professional morality and can some of that process begin in preservice teacher education?

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical assumptions form the foundation for this research. First, I assume that teachers are reflective practitioners (Zeichner & Liston, 1996), rather than technicians. As reflective practitioners, teachers observe, analyze, evaluate, and decide. They have individual responsibility within their professional settings. Second, I assume that moral development is a dialectical or relational process that grows out of practical moral activity (Dewey, 1922; Oser; 1994; Piaget, 1965). The social contexts in which teachers operate are an essential element in their moral development.

A previous study (Dunn, 2001) suggested that the process of constructing a predictable professional role was entwined with the professional moral development process. This implied that habits of operation established in the first few weeks of student teaching might be relatively resistant to change, because moral operations would be embedded in professional identity. Indeed, Oser and Althof (1993) found that their efforts to educate teachers about democratic discourse in moral decision-making produced short-lived changes in experienced teachers' professional practices. Teachers who initially embraced the new ideas returned to their previous methods of operation within a few months.

A single case (Dunn, 2001) cannot provide breadth of understanding. I designed the case study reported here to see how the professional moral development process might vary across individuals and contexts. It provides another individual case, one that contrasts sharply with the earlier one.

The participant

Julie was in her early 20's at the time of the study. She had just completed a degree in Early Childhood Education and was in her first eight weeks of (graduate level) student teaching. Julie was from an upper middle class background and had attended a private preparatory school before coming to the University. Her mother was an educator and had recently retired as headmaster of that same private school.

Julie taught a short preschool session with a classmate the summer before she began her student teaching. The summer "enrichment" session was offered at the private school where she had been educated and her mother had worked. Julie had no other teaching experience outside of supervised University clinical experiences.

Julie did not immediately agree to participate in the study, but asked to think about it for a few days. During those few days, she consulted with another professor and her cooperating teachers, expressing doubts that she was reluctant to share with me directly. I began the study with the understanding that Julie's participation was tentative and that the verity of the data might be compromised by self-consciousness if I probed beyond her comfort level.

The setting

The setting was the same kindergarten classroom that served as the setting for the previous study (Dunn, 2001). It was housed in a rural public elementary school with a

diverse student body. Two certified teachers, and two assistants, shared a large classroom with children in morning and afternoon sessions of about 40 children each. The teachers, assistants, and administrators encouraged community involvement and contact with parents. Community leaders and family members of the children visited the classroom frequently and volunteered their help. The teachers also collaborated and socialized with other early childhood educators in same building.

The teachers were committed to offering Developmentally Appropriate curriculum as articulated by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. They often discussed with each other how best to support the overall development of particular children, while they also embraced their responsibility to prepare their students for school success. The curriculum was enacted via the routines of teacher directed group meetings, a free play period in the classroom "centers," journal writing, and another free play period outdoors. Centers included an art area with easels and varying media laid out on tables, a block area, small manipulative and construction sets, puzzles, a science area (pets, artifacts to handle, etc.), a sensory/water table filled with different materials each week, library, a large dramatic play area, and more structured activities with teachers and assistants at round tables large enough for four to five children. A variety of "centers" were also offered during outdoor play, with more emphasis on gross motor activities such as climbing and riding scooters.

Although both teachers, Ms. Harris and Ms. Morris, were mentors to Julie during her student teaching, she was officially assigned to Ms. Morris. This meant that when the teachers held group meetings, splitting into "home room" groups of about 20 students each, Julie took Ms. Morris's group. The student teacher in the previous study (Dunn,

2001) was officially assigned to Ms. Harris. The studies took place in different academic years, so most of the children in the classroom during the previous study had been promoted to first grade when Julie began her student teaching.

The method

I chose a case study method in order to develop depth and detail in my knowledge of the participant's moral activity and decision-making process. I needed intimacy with the participant and knowledge of the context in order to answer my research questions, which focused on the *process* of professional moral development and the conditions in which that development occurred.

Observations and interviews. Most interviews were very informal due to initial apprehension on the part of the participant. They took place during free play periods, over sack lunches, and after school. Some of these informal interviews included the cooperating teachers. I recorded these interviews in field notes after leaving the setting. The informality of these spontaneous interviews and the length of time that I spent in the classroom as participant observer (six lengthy visits over eight weeks) slowly put Julie at ease about the research project. A few times, when describing a classroom problem, she would ask directly, "What should you do in a case like that?" In every case, I could honestly answer, "It's complicated. It's hard to know what's best." When she realized that I was not interested in judging the moral worth of her decisions, she became more open about her thinking. By the end of the eight weeks, I was able to conduct four semi-structured audio-taped interviews. During those interviews, I asked Julie to expand and clarify issues that came up during our informal interviews. With each interview, Julie participated more openly and offered more insight into her thinking.

Julie's reflective journal and videotape. Julie provided me with a copy of the reflective journal that she kept as a course requirement for her student teaching. In her journal, Julie often recorded problems and dilemmas before they came up in interviews. In some cases, Julie articulated aspects of a dilemma more thoroughly in her journal than she did face-to-face. I found the journal very helpful in framing questions for the semi-structured interviews. Also, because Julie made entries on a daily basis, I had evidence of the appearance and duration of each dilemma. Toward the end of the eight-week data collection period, Julie asked her cooperating teachers to videotape her in several kinds of teaching situations related to an emergent project on restaurants. She presented the video clips with comments in a student teaching seminar. I attended the seminar at Julie's invitation and she also provided me with a copy of the tape.

Triangulation from the university supervisor. Julie's university supervisor provided copies of documents that she generated in the supervision process. The documents included teaching observations and evaluations. I also attended and audio-taped conferences between supervisor and participant as well as a final evaluative conference with Julie, Ms. Morris, and the supervisor.

Analysis. Informal analysis during data collection yielded themes that I pursued in subsequent observations and interviews. Formal analysis involved describing themes and combing the data repeatedly to flesh out the themes and look for evidence that might extend or contradict. I also charted events and themes across data sources to triangulate perceptions of the participant with those of myself, the cooperating teachers, and the university supervisor.

Results

From the very beginning, Julie had a definite idea of her professional moral responsibility: to "put the child first." Probing for details in our first interview, I found that she had a framework of "the good" for children and felt compelled to seek what was good for each child despite cultural or institutional pressures. Julie's concept of what was good for children (as stated the first week of her student teaching) included: protecting the child's dignity and autonomy, creating a close classroom community, establishing trust between teacher and child, fostering productive communication among all adults in the child's life, and safeguarding the child's health and safety. However, she repeatedly returned to the phrase, "putting the child first," and felt that it truly expressed her sense of professional responsibility.

Julie's feeling that she should always "put the child first" was closely tied to the first item in her list of what was "good" for children. She returned again and again to the integrity of the individual child and the importance of respecting each child's autonomy. She said explicitly that it would be wrong to compromise the child's needs and interests under pressure. When pressed for an example, she said that perhaps a teacher wanted to teach a child to write his or her name, but the child had no interest in learning to write his or her name and was not developmentally ready. She said, "That would not be 'putting the child first.' That would be putting the curriculum first..." For Julie, putting the curriculum first would not be respectful of the child's autonomy.

At the end of her eight weeks of kindergarten student teaching, Julie still believed that she was morally responsible to "put the child first." However, her understanding of what that phrase meant was quite different. She said during her final interview, "I'm less

naïve. It's just not really that black and white. The more you know, the harder it is [to make decisions]." I said, "Well, it sounds like 'what's best for the child' has become a little more complicated," and she answered, "Yeah, but even in those little think-on-your-feet situations, that question is always lurking." The complications that modified Julie's understanding of the moral imperative to "put the child first," fell into three strands.

Strand One: Sharing Responsibility with Others Early in her student teaching, Julie had an experience that sensitized her to the ways in which a family's values might differ from her own. She found that she would sometimes have to accept and support the values of a child's family, even if they did not completely agree with her idea of "the good" for children. In some cases failure to support the family's values could potentially harm the child more than accepting them and compromising her own ideal.

There was a child in Julie's class who was a Jehovah's Witness. Julie discovered this when she tried to persuade the child to salute the flag and was stopped by one of the cooperating teachers. Julie immediately felt remorse at putting the child in the position of choosing between loyalty to her family's religion and pleasing the teacher. She at first attributed her mistake to her own ignorance and vowed to learn more about each and every child. However, after going home that evening, she began to think more and more about the dilemma she was in as the child's teacher. Her journal entries for several days included reflection on the implications of the family's religious values on their child's educational experience.

Julie did not want the Jehovah's Witness child to be excluded from classroom events, possibly deteriorating the class community or even alienating the child from school. Julie's idea of "the good" for children included a strong classroom community,

but her ideal was being undermined by the values of the child's parents. They wanted their daughter to feel "separate" from the school social context and more connected to her family and church. Julie could see that the parents provided a stable and loving home. She did not want to undermine the child's attachment to her family and church. However, Julie felt that the child's educational experience would be diminished if she did not participate as a full member of the classroom community.

Julie talked to her cooperating teachers about eliminating classroom celebrations that were focused on holidays and birthdays. They explained that they had tried to do that in the past. What they found was that most of the parents in their community were far more likely to become involved in school events when those events were organized around holiday themes or their own child's birthday. Parent involvement was a high priority for both cooperating teachers and they were not willing to jeopardize their tried-and-true plan to encourage parent participation.

Although Julie never relinquished her professional responsibility, she began to accept the fact that others' values would permeate her professional practice. The Jehovah's Witness family was only one example. Julie had another student with sporadic attendance whose family successfully resisted all efforts by teachers and truant officers to improve the situation. Julie also found that many decisions needed to be made jointly with other faculty members whose priorities or values differed from her own. Often professionals use reflective processes to reframe intractable problems into problems that can be solved with professional expertise and action, sometimes disregarding the complexity of the problem (Schön, 1983). Julie actually did the opposite. She used reflective processes to increase the complexity and highlight the intractable nature of her

professional problems. She made compromises, but she continued to express concern about ongoing dilemmas. She began to describe some of these dilemmas as "layered" problems.

Strand Two: Indeterminate Needs of Children Julie also struggled with "putting the child first" as she came to understand that her knowledge of each child would always be limited. In our first interview, Julie expressed doubts about always being able to *provide* what a child needed, but she did not seem to anticipate any problems with *knowing* what a child needed. As her student teaching got underway, Julie found that "putting the child first" was sometimes hampered by her uncertain knowledge of particular children.

One example was Carlos, a child learning English as a second language. During group meetings, Carlos was always eager to participate and respond to questions. However, he usually repeated the comment or response of another child. As Julie said, on many occasions, there was "clearly no connection." However, once a class visitor brought an owl into the classroom and told the children about how owls' wings were different from other birds. Carlos later demonstrated that he completely understood the speaker. He drew an owl, its distinct wing feathers clearly marked, and explained, "It cut. It cut, to fly quietly." Julie found that the more she observed Carlos, the more questions she had about his abilities and needs.

Carlos also had difficulty making friends. The other children regularly reported that Carlos had either done something inappropriate or needed the teacher's help. Julie had difficulty discerning which of his social problems were associated with inability to communicate and which were signs of social development problems. For example, on the

playground, children came to her for several days in a row, saying, "Quick. Carlos needs you." Every time, she found Carlos under the slide, apparently unharmed. Eventually the children quit responding to his calls for help. Julie wondered if Carlos was reassuring himself that he could get help if he needed it, or if he was trying to "call for help" in a deeper sense.

Carlos also had trouble with various literacy skills. During journal writing time, Carlos did not appear to know the names of letters and had trouble dictating coherent sentences. Some of the other English learners had fewer problems in these areas, but she had no way of really comparing their experience outside of school.

Julie found that her understanding of child development and her ability to make systematic and detailed observations of children were very useful in the classroom. However, her knowledge and skill did not always lead her to definite conclusions about children's needs. The path of development was not as smooth as she had expected, and atypical development was harder to understand than she had expected. In order to "put the child first," Julie had to understand what the child needed, what was "good" for a particular child. Sometimes her initial observations seemed to indicate a fairly simple approach, but subsequent observations indicated that her conclusions were ill founded. When her careful observations revealed puzzling or conflicting information, Julie was still unwilling to abdicate her responsibility. She sometimes found a situation frustrating and even heartbreaking. However, she also persisted in trying to understand each child in his or her complexity.

Strand Three: The Necessity of Curricular Standards By the end of her eight weeks of kindergarten student teaching, Julie began to accept the necessity of curricular

standards for all children. Although Julie initially said that the curriculum should be completely subject to the child's developmental "readiness" and to the child's interests, she ended up saying, "There are just some things that all children need to know."

One area in which Julie came to accept necessary curricular standards was literacy. During the first few weeks of her student teaching, Julie often noted in her journal that the children were much more engaged during their free play periods than they were during the teachers' mini-lessons on letters or during journal time. Some of the children even had trouble attending to an entire read-aloud story. Often when she noted these things, she would follow with questions about how to engage children in literacy through play. One day she wrote,

> Can these group lessons involve kids the way centers do? Is play the only way kids learn? I say this because the letters in most cases have no meaning to them unless the letter we are studying [is] the first letter in their name... How do you go about this type of instruction?

Julie was beginning to reflect on the importance of literacy, not only in school, but in life in general. She was also curious about how to instruct children when it became apparent that exploration and curiosity would not lead children to full literacy.

One day I noticed that Julie was observing me closely during journal writing time. I was working with a little girl who was quick to give me a short sentence that she wanted to write, but had difficulty selecting letters to represent each word. She had a card with the alphabet in front of her and stared for a long time at the letters. I asked, "What sound do you hear?" She easily pronounced the initial sound of the word and continued to stare at her alphabet card. After a few seconds, I asked, "Would you like me to help you?" She

said, "Yes, " and I pointed to the letter, said the letter name, and said the sound. She wrote it down.

Later, Julie asked me, "How did you know to just tell her?" I explained that I had not been sure what the child was thinking. That was why I asked her if she wanted help. I said that I suspected, since she knew the sound she wanted to represent, that she just didn't know which letter corresponded to the sound. I told Julie that if that was the case, she'd never be able to figure it out because that information was a social convention and not logical. Julie had actually been thinking about that. She could see that children were highly engaged during self-directed play. Self-directed play was also attractive to her because it encouraged autonomy and class community, two of her closely held values for children. However, she said that lately she'd been thinking in a lot of situations with the children, "How are they ever going to know if you don't tell them?"

Julie also had a student, Joshua, who avoided any activity that would require him to use small motor control or sustained effort. He flitted through the room during center time, never settling with anything for more that five minutes. Julie talked with Ms. Morris at length about Joshua. Ms. Morris felt that if Joshua continued his flitting around, he would not develop the motor skills and task persistence he needed to succeed in school. During her final evaluation conference with her supervisor and Ms. Morris, Julie described her work in the following way:

> Children are given choices at center time and in most cases they can manage their own time and move freely about the room. I feel that with the freedom and routines that have been established that the children feel safe to explore and take risks in the environment.

Then she paused dramatically and added, "In most cases." She laughed and Ms. Morris joined in her laughter, adding, "Some of them can't manage their *entire* life." Julie explained to the supervisor that she had decided to give Joshua "some jobs" every day. When Joshua finished the things Julie asked him to do, he was free to play wherever he liked. Julie had decided that Joshua's needs were best served by providing some constraint, a decision that she would probably have judged as "putting the curriculum first" a few weeks earlier.

In our final interview, I asked Julie if she was still seeing her professional dilemmas in "layers." She said that was as good a metaphor as any. She added, "I think a lot of things are like that...There are just so many aspects and layers and individual differences." As Julie understood more of the complexity of teaching, she became less sure of which particular actions would be "putting the child first" in particular situations. Sharing responsibility with others, accepting the uncertainty of her knowledge of particular children, and seeing the necessity of curricular standards had changed her understanding of children's real needs.

Putting the Child First in a Class Project Despite the difficulties that Julie encountered, and her acceptance of certain limitations, she was able to operate according to her idea of the "good" by developing an emergent curriculum project that built a stronger classroom community, built trust between herself and the children, and improved communication among teachers and parents. Her guiding principle throughout was the dignity and autonomy of each child. When I asked how she had come up with the idea of a restaurant project, Julie explained, "[I wanted] something that I thought the kids could relate to. Something they'd feel like they had ownership with. Something where I

didn't feel like I was in charge." The children were curious about restaurants and had been to restaurants with their families. The family of one of the students owned a small restaurant in town. Julie thought that with their prior experience and the experiences she could provide, the children would be able to run a simple restaurant successfully.

At the end of the project, I asked Julie if she felt the children had taken ownership of the project as she expected. She said,

> I listened to the things that they wanted to do. I tried my hardest to put them in that position in the restaurant. I let them name it. I let them make the food, let them make their own stuff. So in every avenue that I could, that I felt like it was appropriate, I let them be in charge.

I was able to participate in the culmination of the project, when the children opened their restaurant for business. I was astounded at the parent and community response. The customers were arriving faster than the hosts and hostesses could seat them. The children were obviously proud of the project. Besides executing their jobs in a "professional" manner, I heard several children pointing out positive features of the restaurant to the guests! During the time that the restaurant was in operation, Julie circulated around the room to observe the children, but did not take an active role. As she explained later,

> Well, I think I trusted them to run the restaurant.... They knew their jobs. They knew what to do. And I just didn't do anything. I trusted them to come up with answers, too... I trusted them to work with each other and go get the food and do all that.

Julie's selection of a project, and the way in which she led the project, were in accordance with her closely held beliefs about the "good" for children. She supported the

dignity and autonomy of the child, established trust between herself and the children, and encouraged the development of classroom community. Every child had a part to play. Julie's determination to "put the child first" in everything she did as a teacher had become problematic, but she was more determined than ever to do it.

Conclusions and Implications

Julie's professional moral development during student teaching has both theoretical and practical implications. Julie's case is in sharp contrast to an earlier one (Dunn, 2001). The differences in the two cases suggest that further research is needed on the way novice teachers' conceptions of "self" may influence their perceptions of their professional "conditions" and consequently their professional moral development.

Theoretical Implications Julie entered her student teaching with a clear mission. She was primarily concerned with fostering each child's full developmental potential and saw her responsibility as a matter of "putting the child first." It was as if Julie entered her student teaching with a sense of "having a job to do." She had little concern for others' perceptions of how she was doing in her job, even though she frequently sought others' insights and advice when she had questions. When I, or her supervisor, asked her to evaluate her decisions or her work, Julie used the responses of the children as her gauge. If she had evidence that the children were learning and developing in the ways that she hoped, she knew she was doing a good job.

It is interesting that Julie, with her autonomous sense of moral purpose, was able to establish an open and tolerant democratic discourse in the classroom with children and other adults. This was especially evident in the restaurant project, when children participated by sharing knowledge, offering suggestions, coordinating with others,

disagreeing with others, and making decisions through consensus or voting. Even though the cooperating teachers offered their help by saying, "Just tell us what to do," Julie sought their suggestions and involved them in aspects of decision making as well. Julie's concept of the "good" for children involved fostering autonomy, building community, and building trust. Establishing democratic discourse was not something Julie consciously set out to do. She needed to establish discourse in order to accomplish her goal of "putting the child first."

A person acting with a clear sense of mission, definite values and goals, and respect for the autonomy of others, has characteristics consistent with autonomy as defined in the developmental psychology literature (Deci & Ryan, 1987). Piaget (1965) associated autonomous morality with a way of standing in relation to others, namely relations of mutual respect. Julie's stated professional goals, her personal values, her professional decisions and operations, and her way of relating with others were remarkably consistent. It appears that Julie's personal moral autonomy allowed her to create a climate in which children's autonomy could flourish. The relationship between democratic living and children's moral development is well substantiated (cf. Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977). Julie's case suggests that a teacher's personal moral autonomy may be closely related to his or her ability to establish a climate for democratic living in the classroom. If this is the case, the moral autonomy of teachers and the moral development of children are closely linked.

It is unclear from this study when, where, and how Julie managed to closely integrate her professional values and goals with her personal core values. Julie appeared to operate as someone who had authored a professional role for herself before she began

her student teaching. However, it could be that Julie had little need of a professional *role* as such. Ryan (1991) draws a distinction between the organismic or intrinsic self and the "looking glass" self. When social psychologists speak of roles, they usually mean a negotiated social function, an aspect of the socially constructed "looking glass" self. Julie was operating from a well-integrated organismic self in that she was motivated and self-regulated according to a mission of her own choosing.

It is also evident from Julie's case that a high degree of autonomy is compatible with a high degree of relatedness to others as many moral theorists have maintained (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Piaget, 1965; Ryan, 1991; Youniss & Damon, 1992). In Julie's case, her ability to articulate and operate according to a clearly defined and integrated set of beliefs, understandings, and values made her a predictable and understandable figure in the classroom context. The social context in which Julie was operating was flexible enough to accommodate Julie and her mission. Being a predictable, accepted figure in the classroom helped Julie to stand in mutually respectful relationship with others, open and sustain discourse, and build trust.

Julie's clear mission made her understandable to others, but it did not make her rigid. Through the problems that she encountered while trying to fulfill her professional mission, Julie learned to accept the influence of others' values in her work. She learned to live with uncertain situations and her own limitations. She came to value curricular standards. However, this new learning was apparently integrated into her purpose of "putting the child first." She was still able to enact her mission

Practical Implications Although there were many similarities, Julie did not find her own beliefs and values to be in complete congruence with the beliefs and values of

her cooperating teachers. This did not appear to constrain Julie at all. The cooperating teachers' flexibility and appreciation for divergent views created a climate in which Julie could operate autonomously and confront problems in her own way. Other teacher educators have found that an open and respectful relationship between student teacher and cooperating teacher is more critical to professional growth than a match in teaching philosophy (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Hollingsworth, 1989). This case illustrates one reason why that might be true. Facilitating the student teacher's autonomous operations encourages moral responsibility and allows the student teacher to encounter problems and conflicts inherent in their own teaching beliefs, values, and understandings. As teacher educators, we need to examine our classroom practice and our selection and supervision of clinical placements, reflecting on the ways we are facilitating or constraining personal and professional autonomy. However, this research compared with a previous study implies that the facilitation of autonomy is a complicated and uncertain process.

Julie's Case In a Research Context. Julie's case contrasted sharply with that of Amanda, another student teacher from the same teacher education program (Dunn, 2001). Amanda articulated a socially sensitive model of her professional moral responsibilities and spent a great deal of time and effort trying to understand others' viewpoints, but was less democratic in her actual operations.

Amanda spent weeks getting comfortable with her role. She was aware of herself influencing and affecting others in a "widening circle" of social entanglements, often second-guessing her own decisions. She worried about others' perceptions of her as a teacher. She wasn't sure how to take a decisive leadership role in the classroom and still be considerate of all the needs and expectations of others. She had to gradually claim her

ability to operate autonomously in her new role through nightly reflections on the choices that had been available to her during various incidents that day.

In contrast, Julie had almost no concern about her role. She appeared to be comfortable with the children and collegial with the other adults in the room from the first day. She acted as if she had a job to do and was anxious to get started. Although she wrestled with specific decisions, she did not struggle with her role in the classroom. She was not concerned about what the cooperating teachers or assistants thought of her as a teacher. She did seem concerned about whether or not the children considered her to be predictable and trustworthy, but she never seemed to doubt her authority as their teacher.

What accounts for the tremendous difference in the way these two student teachers viewed professional decision making during the first few weeks of their student teaching? One possibility is that Amanda and Julie were both self-regulating, but they were self-regulating from different "selves." Julie operated consistently from her organismic, intrinsic self, the subjective "I" (Ryan, 1991). Amanda began her teaching experience trying to establish a role as a "real teacher" in a complex social setting. She was operating from her socially constructed "looking glass self," the objective "Me." Operating from an intrinsic self opened Julie to learning from her experience with little ego involvement. In order to operate from a "looking glass self," Amanda had to first construct a professional role, bit by bit, through her interactions.

By contrasting the two cases, the phenomenological nature of social constraint becomes more apparent (Ryan, 1991). In Amanda's case, relatedness was experienced as constraint, and her autonomy suffered. She was unable to establish open democratic discourse with others in her setting. In Julie's case, operating with autonomy decreased

the constraint experienced from others. Feeling less constraint, she was able to establish democratic discourse.

Julie and Amanda set themselves on a course to learn different things. Amanda's consciousness of others' expectations was distracting in some ways, but it allowed her to attend to the construction of a stable professional role as a "real teacher." Her concern about others' perceptions sometimes led to a perfectionist's dilemma in that she concentrated so much on performance that it was hard for her to think clearly about the decisions she was making. Julie seemed more open about her fallibility and concentrated her psychic energy directly on problem solving. Her struggles centered around her growing awareness of others as distinct but largely unknowable individuals. Both Amanda and Julie reflected on their decisions after going home at night. Amanda reflected to discover where her choices had been (because she sometimes was not aware of having a choice during the day) and to make peace with her mistakes. Julie reflected in order to play out all the implications of the choices she already knew that she had to make. Amanda's learning was focused on learning her context and figuring out her place in it and discovering that she did have choices within the parameters of others' expectations. Julie's learning was focused on ways to extend her own values, understandings, and beliefs into her work and "make a difference."

In some ways the participants in these two studies approached each others' understanding. Amanda gained greater awareness of her own choices and claimed a degree of autonomy. Julie became more socially sensitive and acknowledged the relativity of her professional values in the context of teaching.

Implications for Further Research Although the cases discusses here highlight the importance of autonomy in teacher development, particularly teachers' moral development, they also provoke questions about how autonomy can be facilitated and encouraged. The phenomenological nature of autonomy and relatedness implies that preservice teachers will experience our "best efforts" in different ways. The conditions in which teachers "build up" their professional morality may be experienced and understood in very different ways by different individuals. The original questions driving this research appear to be questions that can only be researched by phenomenological methods. Continued research with novice and experienced teachers using narrative (Tirri & Husu, 2000) and case study methods seems promising.

As teacher educators, we need to know how to access and understand our students' moral orientations. We need to know how to facilitate professional moral development in students with varying moral orientations and how best to encourage them when they encounter the inherent struggles embedded in their values, beliefs, and understandings. Understanding the interplay of autonomy and relatedness in learning to teach may provide valuable clues for teacher educators hoping to prepare teachers for the moral complexity of teaching.

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